



MG Viktor G. Zholudev

CG, 37th Guards Rifle Division

Major General Viktor G. Zholudev (22 March 1905 – 21 July 1944) was the commander of the Soviet 37th Guards Rifle Division during the Battle of Stalingrad.

Zholudev joined the Red Army in May 1922 and participated in the 1929 Sino-Soviet conflict during which he was wounded. He became a battalion commander in May 1932, and eventually commanded a division airborne detachment. Zholudev assumed command of the 110th Separate Rifle Regiment in July 1939 and led that regiment in the Battles of Khalkhin Gol against the Japanese through the summer of 1939.

By May 1941, he was commanding the 6th Airborne Brigade of the 3rd Airborne Corps. Near the end of June 1941, he led the brigade in fighting near Kiev (Operation Barbarossa) and reportedly killed 12 Germans personally while opposing a German counterattack. Though he was wounded, he remained at the front leading his brigade. He continued to lead his brigade in fighting against the German invasion until September 1941 when he was seriously wounded and hospitalized.

On 19 January 1942 he was promoted to major general. In August 1942 he was assigned to command the 37th Guards Rifle Division, a subordinate unit to the 4th Tank Army near Stalingrad. In severe fighting along the Don River, Zholudev's division repulsed a German effort to cross the river near Trehostrovskoy. Instead, he ensured the 37th Guards Rifle Division was able to retain its own bridgehead south of the river. On 29 September, Zholudev received orders to move his division to Stalingrad to work for the 62nd Army. The division crossed the Volga on the night of 2-3 October 1942 and moved to take up positions between the 308th and 112th RDs in the vicinity of the Lower Tractor Factory Workers' Village. Zholudev and his division in place in time to help blunt an attack by the 24th Panzer Division that day.

Zholudev faced only desultory German attacks for the next ten days or so until the next big German drive took place against the Tractor Factory. On 14 October, the German LI Corps threw in two relatively fresh divisions against Zholudev's troops. In the brutal fighting that followed, Zholudev was again wounded in a German bombing attack when his command bunker was bombed. The rest of the 37th GRD was severely mauled and it eventually collapsed allowing the Germans to seize the Tractor Factory. By the end of the

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following day, the division was almost destroyed. It was withdrawn from Stalingrad about mid-November with Zholudev still in command.

Following Stalingrad, Zholudev continued to lead Soviet forces against the Germans, leading a corps during Operations KUTUZV, the Bryansk offensive, the Gomel-Rechitsa offensive and the Rogachev-Zhlobin offensive. On 21 July 1944, while leading his corps during Operation BAGRATION, Zholudev was killed by a German artillery barrage.

37th Guards Division Chronology

- 2 Aug 42: The 37th Guards Rifle Division (GRD) was formed from elements of the Soviet 1st Airborne Corps.
- 10 Aug 42: The division arrived near Stalingrad.
- 18 Sep 42: The 37th GRD halted German attempts to cross the Don River and established its own bridgehead across the Don River.
- 2 Oct 42: Stalingrad Front assigned the 37th GRD to operate with the 62nd Army; began crossing the Volga on the night of 3-4 October.
- 4 Oct 42: The division entered combat, taking more than 200 wounded per day in the fighting around the Tractor Factory.
- 14 Oct 42: Much of the division was surrounded or destroyed in fighting throughout the Tractor Factory district.
- 16-17 Oct 42: The 37th GRD was relieved of its positions within the Tractor Factory by the 138th Rifle Division and sent to the Barrikady Factory.
- Mid-Nov 42: The division was withdrawn from Stalingrad after sustaining 95% losses.
- 6 Feb 43: The reconstituted 37th GRD was sent to fight in the Sevsk offensive.
- Aug 43: The division participated in Operation Kutuzov.
- Nov 43: The division participated in the Gomel-Rechitsa Offensive.
- 23 Jun 44: The 37th GRD began participation in Operation BAGRATION.
- 2 Mar 45: The division fought in the East Pomeranian Offensive.
- 28 Mar 45: The division transferred west to take part in the Berlin Offensive.